



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE LURE OF COLONIAL GARDENS

ON the supposition that our grandmothers are to be credited with the beauty of the old-time garden, it has well been said that they seem to have had "green fingers," these grandmothers; to belong to those of whom it is said that a dry stick will take root, let them but plant it, and after whose footsteps flowers spring up, as though they were princesses of fairy-land. All of us, of course, were not so fortunate as to have owned these plant-wise ancestors, skillful in garden ways, wise and gracious women, creating in the wilderness little places of delight. Nevertheless, there were many of them, as can be seen throughout New England, wherever the old houses remain.

It is in "The Lure of the Garden" that Miss Hildegard Hawthorne writes the above, and gives much other information regarding what may be called the Colonial gardens of America.

Flowers first tended to become a major part of gardening in England during the XVII century, and it is to this we owe the fact that the notable flowers and shrubs of England struck root here so early. Neither Puritan nor Cavalier would leave the new glory behind, so that both the grim New England land and the more ardent plantations of the South were enriched with the flowers of the mother country, as well as with her corn and cattle.

There is something singularly touching to us of the present generation in these old gardens, as we find them now

in the old towns, scarcely changed inside their high brick walls, and within whose circumscribed space so many frail and busy hands found joyful labour, so many patient eyes a calm delight. As the iron softened in the soul of the people and happiness and beauty were no longer regarded as sins, the utilitarian side of the garden was less insisted upon, fruits and vegetables were relegated to a place of their own, and the triumphant flowers gaily overran the spaces left vacant. This was about the hour that our actual grandmothers came in at the gate, and inaugurated the most charming era of the American garden. On the stern foundation prepared by their mothers, they laid a softening touch, breathed a more glowing summons over slip and bulb and seed, and were franker of their love.

Miss Hawthorne describes a garden in Salem, Mass., which was familiar to her famous grandfather and still exists in all its old persuasive charm. A strip of grass and shrubbery interpose between house and street, while to the left, over the palings, one can see the path curving round invitingly and plunging into the green depths beyond. Follow this path, and a charming old garden reveals itself. Cherry-trees and wistaria overarch it, disputing the dominion of the air, while on all sides the perennials, long since insurgent trespassers from the beds where they were planted, mingle their colours in an in-

toxicating jumble. Lilies of many sorts, white and purple and spotted; tall pale larkspurs and canterbury-bells, and bachelor's buttons running the gamut of blue from white to indigo. Candleberry, smoke-bush, snow-balls jostle the roses that take refuge on the roof of the summer-house and porch, and in and out of the fence. Myrtle, or periwinkle, with its geometrical flowers of sober blue and its polished leaves, scrambles everywhere, and from odd corners stocks and spice-flower send their sweetness. All the old-fashioned sisterhood, in fact, wander as they will within the precincts of this garden. The old wooden benches stand comfortably under the trees, beyond whose shadow the sun steepens his rays in the tangled colour; a languid, murmurous hum from bee and beetle accentuates the silence, a gentle, interested silence, as of old days brooding over the place, musing of past events.

New England had its big places too. There is an ancient garden in Sharon, Connecticut, that began to take shape as soon as the Revolution had ceded to peace. The fine house, high and broad, high enough to admit a world of sun and air, broad enough to produce a sense of brooding tenderness, the sense of home; the terraces, the orchards, the fish-ponds, many of the flowering trees and shrubs, remain much as they were, except that the honey-locusts have grown gigantic, and the lilacs and syringa look in at the second-story windows.

A tall, green fence of palings whose tops are cut into a clover-leaf shape protects the place and sequesters the garden proper from the fields and lawns. In the past this terraced por-

tion covered two acres, planted with both flowers and vegetables, but it is smaller now, and the vegetables have been banished. The ponds are connected by a riotous brook, reached by way of a broad walk bordered with rows of brilliant annuals on either side, and almost entirely overarched at one time by superb shrubbery, since dead. The path ends just where the brook escapes from the first pond in sprayey falls, and there an arbour buried in honeysuckle and guelder-roses shelters seats for the weary or the idle.

"The Lure of the Garden," as a matter of course, points out that in the South a different mode of life evolved another sort of garden. Gardens more like the great old English places, but more glowing, more luxuriant. The work was done by hosts of slaves, and room and money and inherited luxury were the rule rather than the exception. The accumulated taste of generations sought its expression in these southern gardens, and a touch of stateliness marks them. Much thought and study was given to laying them out, and landscape artists were brought from abroad to assist in designing them.

As an example, Coldstream Plantation, in South Carolina, is cited by Miss Hawthorne, who says that it remains almost perfectly what it was, improved and enriched by its century of green security; adding that the hedges of Coldstream are perhaps its greatest beauty. They are of various kinds, but unusually fine of growth and shape. But the preponderant beauty of the hedges does not prevent the rest of the garden from being wonderful. It blooms the whole year round. In January come the violets, white and purple and fra-

grant, the hyacinths and crocuses, and little flowers with lost names, rarer nowadays than those called rare. February brings the yellow jasmine that flowers before it leaves, and in the sun-warmed corners tulips and narcissi shake out perfume on every wandering breeze. The plum blossoms wreath their snow upon the boughs, the Chinese almonds grow subtly sweet and lovely, while before the month has

the Chinese almonds the tea-arbour shelters gaily, and between this arbour and the house the path separates in all directions, making geometrically shaped beds that are filled with colour. Here the spiræa hangs its drooping fronds of flowerets and the magnolia blooms magnificently. The creamy banana shrub steeps the air with its heavy scent, white and pink diervillas, lilacs in bewildering variety and honeysuckle



Climbing-Roses over a Porch

fairly merged into March, the gay company of daffodils are nodding in the wind and the dogwood flings wide its snowy banners. With March forsythia weaves a mist of gold, and many-coloured irises make rainbow festival, while the forest-trees turn suddenly green and rose.

But wait for April, and then walk down the luring path between the lofty hedges to the northeast corner, where the garden touches its apogee. Behind

tumble into flower—and then, some sudden day, the azaleas blaze into flaming colour, so radiantly glorious as to be entirely unbelievable, except that there they are. Towering high overhead in swelling masses, scattering vivid petals on grass and gravel, all in sunset hues of rose and pink and crimson, yellow and cream and warm white, unforgettable, amazing.

Next come the intense crape-myrtles, the syringa, waxy-white, and the roses,

of every colour and size and shape. Gardenias come with the sweet-peas in May, and then, too, the oleanders turn both pink and sweet.

Month by month, hidden in its encircling hedges, the garden brings its various blossoms to perfection. Even in December it has roses and camellias to show, while the autumn days are intoxicating with late lilies and tall dahlias and the fire of the dying leaves. It was early in 1800 that Robert Wither- spoon brought his bride home to the simple white house and great garden, telling her she was lovelier than any flower it grew. And ever since the garden has been cherished and enjoyed.

But all the southern grandmothers did not live on estates. There were town dwellers there, as in the North. Perhaps Charleston has retained the gardens they made in their original perfection more surely than any other of the old cities, those high-walled gardens of ante-bellum days, whose builders were full of the traditions of XVII century England and France, when gardens grew divine.

There is, for instance, the Miles Brewerton House, with its walled garden. The house is a fine type of the early Georgian with brick-arched loggias overlooking the space of flowers, that stretches north and south. Down the center goes a wide pathway, over-arched by an arbour completely covered with the twining branches of one gigantic climbing rose. The flower beds extend on either side, brick-edged and bordered with sweet violets and other small and fragrant plants. Close to the

house the oleanders and acacias bloom and crowd, and vines are all about, clambering over porches and walls and trees. So secluded it is that the wild song-birds come here to nest, careless of the city close around.

“These high brick walls are characteristic of Charleston’s gardens. They are various in design, relieved by elevations and blind arches, by small turrets and square ends. Often they are entirely hidden under the English ivy, or softly pink from long standing in sun and rain. Some are coped with stone. All lend magic glimpses of the wonderlands they shelter, through an arched gateway or unexpected opening, or by spilling over a shower of wistaria or laburnum. But these placed are essentially town gardens, made to lend seclusion and quiet to the house, as well as loveliness, and to be lived in as part of the home. They are lovable, discreet, and sequestered, nor are they entirely selfish. For down the steps and beside the porches, over the walls and through the lattices, the flowers give every passer-by hints and promises and prophecies, no full revelation, but exquisite glimpses. Charm is the keynote, and the perfect relation of house and garden each to each, and both to their owners’ needs, whether of body or soul.

“Surely our grandmothers of the North and the South, working in a new land and under strange conditions, left us a worth-while heritage in these posy beds and garden closes of theirs, a heritage whose value we are growing to appreciate, and whose example we shall do well to imitate.”